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SPECIAL REPORT

Beijing International Book Fair
Bookseller Regional Coverage: SEBA, NYR/MABA
The Story Behind 'Off the Record' • Interview with Ariel Dorfman

Publishers Weekly

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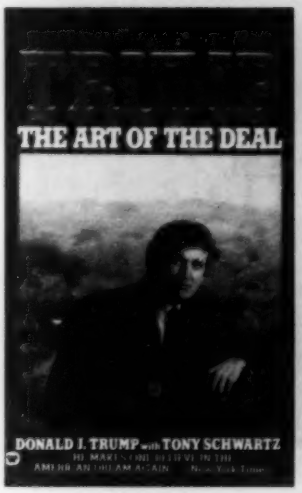

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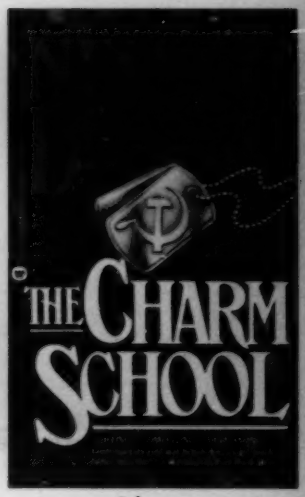

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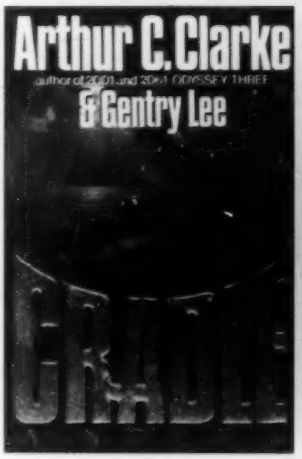

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LETTERS

More Ado over Birth Dates

Concerning the "My Say" (Sept. 30) by Ethan Mordden on including the birthdate of an author in CIP data, I would like to comment that there are no "bad guys," no fascist conspiracy, no desire to infringe on an individual's right to privacy.

Birthdates, when available (and no librarian goes out of his/her way these days to track down the birthdates of obscure individuals—more often than not, they are simply left out), do serve a purpose. The purpose is to help the reader to distinguish Author A from Author B from Author C, when they all have the same, or similar, names. The date of birth is a filing device to sort them out in the card catalogue. Librarians once thought that it would be helpful for the reader to see the body of works by Smith, John, 1896–XXXX, separate from the body of works by Smith, John, 1920–XXXX, and Smith, John, 1962–XXXX.

These days, however, cataloguing rules and indexing rules have relaxed somewhat, and—no busy cataloger having the time to look up those birthdates (not a priority item)—no one breaks into a sweat if the date isn't supplied in the CIP. Don't get me wrong—it's still nice to have, for the reader's sake—but it's NO BIG DEAL not to have it. Sorry to disappoint Mr. Mordden, but librarians are the good guys here. There's no conspiracy—we don't care, really we don't, how old you and your colleagues are.

Manning, Jo, 1940–XXXX
Librarian
Reader's Digest General Books
New York, N.Y.

Why should Mr. Mordden get so worked up about an author's age in the CIP data?

Why not assume that it's simply copyright protection, which, under the new laws, covers the copyright for the life of the author, plus 50 years?

Maybe some people are morbidly interested in an author's expiration date (no pun intended, really). But they don't buy books based on an author's age, but on his skill.

Yvonne R. Freund
New York, N.Y.

The Fiction Editor

There is something amiss in the excerpt from Thomas McCormack's *The Fiction Editor* (Sept. 2), but I can't quite put my finger on it. Possibly this gut feeling has something to do with McCormack's over-generalization that Senior Editor is not giving his/her job of editing a full 100% simply because some editorial decisions are made on instinct; but then, even as inane as that generalization is, it is not the real villain here. McCormack states that:

"Half a dozen times a year we read a novelist's fervent acknowledgment of his editor's contribution—only to encounter in the novel itself remediable infirmities of such undeniability it's hard to figure the writer was told about them and just refused to fix them."

What can one conclude about such a statement except that there is only one person to blame for a novel's weak internal structure—old Senior Editor. McCormack raves that because the act of writing "can now be anatomized and codified," it is a craft that can be learned—by anyone. Yet he blames Senior Editor for not catching 100% of the errors (dermal or internal) in manuscripts written by these "anatomized and codified" writers; indeed, McCormack is postulating that we make bad worse by matching these cadaverish writers with "anatomized and codified" editors.

The anatomy of what could result in literature is frightening. What will happen when great writers begin to appear again and the work they produce does not fit within the inert, "it's not done that way" minds of the New Codified Editors? What will be done under such strict craftsmanship is simple. Great literature will have to go underground and slowly surface here and there in the small press. Then again, maybe that is what is happening already. Seen any great literature lately?

Susan Nelene Salaki, Editor
Guidelines Newsletter
Pittsburgh, Mo.

CALENDAR

Monday, October 24 *Association of American Publishers, General Publishing Division* seminar, "Direct Marketing," 8:30 a.m–5 p.m.; McGraw-Hill Auditorium, 1221 Ave. of the Americas, New York, N.Y. Luncheon speaker: Jerry Della Femina. Fee: members $85, nonmembers $150. Information: AAP/GPD, (212) 689-8920.

Wednesday, October 26 *Editorial Freelancers' Association* panel on picture research, 5 p.m. (program 6 p.m.), Women's City Club, Gramercy Twin Building, 35 E. 21st St., 7th Floor, New York, N.Y. Information: (212) 677-3357.

Wednesday, October 26 *Publishers' Publicity Association* luncheon, Loews Summit Hotel, 51st and Lexington, New York, N.Y. Cocktails 12 noon, lunch 12:30. Speakers: Larry Kirshbaum of Warner Books, Esther Margolis of Newmarket Press and Susan Petersen of Ballantine/Del Rey/Fawcett/Ivy. Fee: members $30, nonmembers $35. Reservations (by Oct. 19): Karen Mender, St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10010.

Sun., Oct. 30–Mon., Oct. 31 *Associated YM-YWHAs of Greater New York* present the Third Annual Jewish Heritage Book Festival, at the Seventh Regiment Armory, Park Ave. and 67th St., New York, N.Y. Hours: Sunday, 10 a.m.–8 p.m.; Monday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Publishers, bookstores, academic presses, antiquarian booksellers and cultural institutions will display and sell works in English, Hebrew and Yiddish by Jewish authors and on Jewish topics, plus author programs and entertainment. Admission: $5, seniors and children $3. Information: (212) 751-8880.

Saturday, November 5 *Society of Children's Book Writers* presents its 13th annual writers' conference on children's literature, at Bank Street College, New York, N.Y. Keynote speaker Peggy Parish and other experts will offer techniques in writing, illustrating and marketing. Tuition (includes breakfast and lunch): members $40, others $45. Registration: SCBW, P.O. Box 20233, Park West Finance St., New York, N.Y.; (212) 243-4370.

Correction: In "Balancing the Books: U.S. Exports, Imports" (Sept. 9), the column headings, Table A, were mislabeled. The columns labeled "1985" should have should read "1986"; and the columns labeled "1986" should have read "1987."

Due to misinformation, Shavna Kripalani of Warren, Gorham & Lamont was incorrectly listed as a former human resources associate (People, Sept. 30). She was formerly an employment specialist. □